

## Nez Perce Tribal Forestry/Fire Division Update



The Nez Perce Tribal Forestry/Fire Division receives money from the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) Northwest Regional Office (NWRO) to complete treatments and planning activities in conjunction with the National Fire Plan. This money is available from two programs: Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) and Hazardous Fuels Reduction (HFR).

Wildland Urban Interface projects and activities may be conducted on tribal trust and restricted land, tribal fee, private, state, and federal property located in and adjacent to tribal communities. Agencies and tribes are cautioned to assess liability issues associated with the application of any treatment on non-tribal land. Hazardous fuels reduction (non-WUI) projects will be conducted on tribal trust and restricted land only. The only exception to this policy is where planning and implementation of projects on non-tribal property is a collaborative effort with the neighboring agency. This type of project is justified for cost effectiveness, firefighter/public safety, and/or community protection of property. (BIA Fuels Program Business Management Handbook, April 2004)

The Nez Perce Tribal Forestry/Fire Division's WUI work in the past has occurred mainly on Tribal Trust Lands, with a few acres accomplished on private lands. Over the past year, there has been more coordination efforts with the Idaho Department of Lands to provide National Fire Plan funding for fuels treatments and fire prevention opportunities on private lands within the Nez Perce Indian Reservation. WUI fuels treatments occurring on Tribal lands during 2004 included:

- Defensible space projects around residences
- 40 acres of spraying noxious weeds and reseeding with competitive grass seed mixes
- 50 acres of brush reduction by pile and burn methods or shredding/mulching activities
- 110 acres of thinning pre-commercial trees and resulting slash management activities
- 20 acres of prescribed burning
- Future fuels planning activities on the Reservation
- 880 acres of goat browsing for brush and noxious weed reduction

Goats browsing on mature brush



Treatment after goat browsing



The ***Student Conservation Association (SCA) Fire Monitoring Team*** was responsible for measuring and monitoring the effectiveness of fuels treatments from June to November.

- ***The Student Conservation Association (SCA) Fire Education Corps*** is a major initiative designed to help property owners protect their homes from wildland fire. Fire Education Corps teams are made up of volunteers from around the country, trained in wildland-urban interface education and property evaluation. Team goals include raising wildland fire awareness and reducing wildfire risks through community outreach and education, fuels reduction projects, and collecting data for fire fighting agencies. The 2004 team has been involved in numerous activities that have helped them achieve their goals for the year. Some of the highlights are as follows:

- *Property Evaluations-* Team Nez Perce focused their energy on the reservation over the summer months and then joined in effort with interagency partners during the fall. Canvassing was done in collaboration with the Idaho Department of Lands (Maggie Creek FPD) and the U.S. Forest Service (Kooskia Ranger Station). All homes in the towns visited received fire education material. 130 home owners agreed to home assessments and were evaluated in the areas of Winchester, Lapwai, Syringa/Lowell, and Caribel.



- *Community Outreach and Education-* Outreach and education were accomplished in many different ways. A presentation on general defensible space aspects and fireworks safety was conducted at the Lapwai Boys and Girls club during the Fourth of July week. The SCA Team utilized a defensible space home model and put on a brief fireworks display to get their fire message across creatively. A firewise home preparation presentation will take place in January of 2005 from the cooperation of the Museum of Winchester History, Winchester Lake State Park, Hell's Gate State Park, the Washington State University Master Gardner's Asotin County Extension, and the SCA.
- *Fuels Reduction Projects-* Demonstration homes were chosen for the team to model good firewise landscaping. A total of six homes sites were chosen in Lapwai, Winchester, and Syringa/Lowell. Two defensible space treatments were completed with the teamwork of the Idaho Department of Lands and SCA in Syringa.

HFR fuels treatments occurring on Tribal lands during 2004 included:

- 40 acres of brush reduction by pile and burn methods or shredding/mulching activities
- 375 acres of thinning pre-commercial trees and resulting slash management activities
- 1640 acres fenced with barbed wire and water improvements for grazing activities.